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BRIEF ACCOUNT  
OF THE RISE  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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A

# BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF THE RISE

OF THE

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# Rise of the Society of Friends.

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IN tracing the history of the Christian Church from its earliest establishment, through the period of its decline, until it reached that long and dark night of apostacy which for ages preceded the Reformation, we find, that in proportion as the life and substance of religion decayed, a multitude of ceremonies were introduced in their place, little, if at all, less onerous than the typical institutions of the Mosaic law. This has ever been the result when the ingenuity of man has attempted to improve or adorn the simplicity of spiritual religion. There is a natural activity in the human mind which prompts it to be busy, and can with difficulty submit to that self-renunciation which the Gospel enjoins. It is much easier for a professor of religion to be engaged in the performances of rites and ceremonies than to yield his heart an entire sacrifice to God. Objects presented to the mind through the medium of the natural senses produce a powerful impression, and are more easily apprehended than those truths which are addressed to the intellectual faculties only, and are designed to subdue and control the wayward passions of the human heart. It is not surprising, therefore, that instead of that worship of the Almighty Father which is in Spirit and in Truth, and which requires the subjection of the will and activity of man, and the prostration of the whole soul in reverent humility before God, a routine of ceremonies and forms should have been substituted, calculated to strike the eye and the ear with admiration.

As the period of degeneracy was marked by the great amount and increase of these ceremonies, so, when it pleased the Most High to raise up individuals and enlighten them to see the existing corruptions, and how far the professed Chris-

tian Church had departed from original purity, and to prepare them for instruments in working a reformation, one of their first duties was, to draw men off from those rites by which their minds had been unduly occupied, and on which they had too much depended, instead of pressing after experimental religion in the heart.

This, of necessity, was a progressive work. The brightness of meridian day bursts not at once upon the world. There is a gradual increase of light from its earliest dawn until it reaches its fullest splendor; yet the feeblest ray which first darts through the thick darkness, is the same in its nature with the most luminous blaze. It makes manifest those things which the Divine controversy is against, and leads back to the state of Gospel simplicity and purity from which the visible Church has lapsed. And although the light may not be sufficiently clear to discover all the corruptions, nor the state of the world such as to bear their removal, yet those holy men who act up faithfully to the degree of knowledge with which they are favored, are worthy of double honor, as instruments for correcting the growing evils of their day, and preparing the way for further advancement in the reformation.

It is interesting to observe, that the different religious Societies which have arisen since the reformation all aimed at the attainment of greater degrees of spirituality and a more fervent piety than was generally to be found among the sect from which they sprung. The idea, that forms were too much substituted for power, and a decent compliance with the externals of religion for its heart-changing work seems to have given rise to them all. Each successive advance lopped off some of the ceremonial excrescences, with a view of making the system more conformable to the Apostolic pattern. In the early part of the seventeenth century considerable progress was made in this work, tending to prepare the way for that more full and complete exemplification of the original simplicity of the Gospel which was exhibited to the world by George Fox and his coadjutors. It is no arrogant assumption to assert, that to whatever point in the reformation we turn

our attention, we find the germ of those principles, which were subsequently developed and carried out by the founders of our Society, actuating the Reformers and leading them to results approaching nearer to those attained by FRIENDS, in proportion to the faithfulness and measure of light bestowed on the individual.

Opinions very similar to those held by our Society on the subjects of the indwelling and guidance of the Holy Spirit, baptism and other ceremonies, superstitious rites, war, oaths, and a ministry of human appointment and education, were promulgated by individuals at different periods antecedent to the rise of Friends, though not advanced as distinguishing tenets by any considerable body of professors.

The reformation from Popery under Edward VI. was but partial. Many of the errors and superstitions of that pompous and ceremonial religion were retained; partly because the dawning light was not sufficient to reveal their true character, and partly in compliance with the popular prejudice in favor of ancient institutions and of a showy and imposing form of worship. There were, however, men of eminent piety and religious discernment who perceived the degeneracy from primitive Christianity, which gave birth to those corruptions, and had since fostered their growth and promoted their increase, until they threatened to supplant vital religion.

On the death of Edward, the hopes which these had cherished, of further advances toward the original simplicity and purity of Christianity, were extinguished by the accession of Mary and the barbarous persecution which followed. Many sealed with their blood the testimony of a good conscience, and by faithfulness unto death not only proved the sincerity of their profession, but prepared the way for those nearer approaches to Divine Truth which have since been made. If the clearer spiritual light of the present day unfolds to us some points in which the belief of those holy men was defective, it also places in stronger relief, as a noble example worthy of all imitation, the undaunted firmness and integrity of their characters, their love of Christ, and their devotion to his

cause. It cannot be viewed in any other light than as a Divine interposition in behalf of his suffering people, that this bigoted and relentless Queen so soon closed her career, after a brief and inglorious reign.

When Elizabeth came to the throne, she found herself surrounded by Papists strongly attached to their religion and zealous for its support. Her prudence dictated a cautious course in changing the existing order of things. Too great or sudden alterations might have hazarded the peace of the realm, and even brought her crown into jeopardy. Elizabeth, moreover, was fond of magnificence in her devotions; and in this respect the pomp of popery suited well with her inclinations. It is questionable, indeed, whether her preference for the Protestant religion was not as much owing to her affection for her brother, King Edward, and respect for the memory of her father, as to any decided conviction of its nearer approximation to the standard of Scripture Truth.

She restored the liturgy and order of worship as established by her brother, and strictly enjoined its observance, though many of her Protestant subjects conscientiously objected to some parts of it. The idol of uniformity, and the long cherished idea of a Catholic Church, to which the Papists had made such lavish sacrifices of human life, had strong attractions even for Protestants; and Elizabeth, as well as her successors, persecuted even to death not a few of her pious subjects, in the vain attempt to coerce the consciences of men and reduce them to one common standard.

The doctrines and form of worship revived by Elizabeth after the death of Mary, left the minds of many much dissatisfied. They desired a more thorough separation from the errors of Popery, a similar method of church government, and a purer and more spiritual religion and worship. These were called Puritans; a name which, though bestowed on them with no good design, yet agreed well with those things for which they contended.

The Protestants who fled to Frankfort during the persecution under Queen Mary, unanimously concluded to dispense



with the litany, surplice and responses of the Church of England; that public service should begin with a general confession of sins, then the people to sing a psalm in metre in a plain tune, after which the minister should pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and proceed to sermon. These innovations on the established order of the Service-Book led to warm disputes, which soon spread into England; and though at times the breach would seem nearly closed, yet the controversy was again and again renewed, and efforts made to procure further reformatations from the errors of the Romish Church.

Soon after Elizabeth came to the throne, she appointed a Commission to review the liturgy as established by Edward. The alterations made in it were rather in favor of the Papists than the Puritans, by many of whom it was viewed as more objectionable than the old Service-Book. It was, however, presented to Parliament, and adopted as the national form of religion, by "The Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer and Service in the Church," &c. The same Parliament passed an act vesting the entire ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the crown, and empowering the Queen, "with the advice of her commissioners or metropolitan, to ordain and publish such further ceremonies and rites as may be for the advancement of God's glory and edifying his Church, and the reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments."

The act of uniformity was the source of great mischief to the Church. Many conscientious ministers and others could not conform to its requirements, believing them to be opposed to the doctrines and precepts of the Bible. The rigorous enforcement of the act, while it punished the bodies of men and wasted their estates, did not convince their minds; but rather strengthened their opposition to and alienated their affections from the Church.

In the doctrinal views of the two parties, the Conformists and the Puritans, there was little avowed difference. The uneasiness arose chiefly from a conscientious objection to the assumptions of the bishops—the introduction of numerous unscriptural offices and titles in the church—the laxity of her disci-

pline—the prohibition of extemporaneous prayer—the numerous festivals—the use of organs and other instruments of music in time of worship—of the sign of the cross in the ceremony of baptism—kneeling at the ceremony of the supper—bowing at the name of Jesus and on entering or leaving their places of worship—to the ring in marriage, as well as parts of the words spoken during the rite; and to the use of the surplice and other vestments by the priest during Divine service. Such were the principal grounds of difference in the commencement of the dispute; and though the Conformists affected to consider them non-essential, yet they insisted on them with a pertinacity which increased the opposition and widened the breach, until at length it produced an entire separation, from which have sprung the various classes of Dissenters.

That the Puritans were conscientious in their objections to the established religion, will not be questioned by such as are acquainted with the piety of their lives, and the patience and fortitude with which they endured persecution for their religious opinions. Connected with these was a steadfast resistance to the assumed power of the crown, as visible head of the Church, to prescribe to, and control, the conscience of the subject in things not essential. Against this they manfully contended while the reins of government were in the hands of their opponents. But when the revolution of civil affairs placed *them* in possession of the power, they, too, soon forgot the principles of rational and Christian liberty for which they had formerly struggled, and exercised on others the oppression and cruelty which they had so much condemned in their own case.

Contending for their religious liberty naturally had the effect to make them more jealous of their civil rights; and hence during the subsequent reign, we find them standing forth as staunch opposers of the encroachments of the crown.

That they were instruments in the hand of Providence for carrying forward the reformation from the errors and superstitions by which Christianity had been overlaid, cannot be doubted; yet as this was a gradual work accomplished by



slow degrees, the corruption not being all discovered at once, but progressively, according to the faithfulness of those engaged in the work ; so others rose up and separated from them, who carried the reformation still further.

The first of these was the Society of Brownists, who contended that the Church of England was not a true church, because of the Popish corruptions which she retained and enforced, and her persecution for the sake of religion—that the power of church government was in the members—that the ministry was not subject to human selection and ordination, but that any brother who felt engaged might preach or exhort, and that prayer was not to be limited to prescribed forms. Their mode of discipline was congregational, every Society being distinct and independent of the others ; holding intercourse and communion, however, as brethren and professors of a common faith. The severe persecutions which they experienced from the government, induced many of this persuasion to fly to the continent, where they met with little better treatment. They appear to have been a zealous and sincere people, living with strictness and regularity, and preaching with much fervor and energy.

The spirit of inquiry was now abroad, and increasing in vigor and activity. Instead of receiving opinions on the authority of church canons or dignitaries, there was a growing disposition to bring them to the test of revealed truth. Many which had long been implicitly adopted, and transmitted from one generation to another, were now called in question and warmly debated. As early as 1617, John Selden published his *History of Tithes*, in which he contends that they are of human, not Divine, appointment. It was not to be supposed that those whose worldly interests were affected by such an opinion would suffer his book to pass without severe animadversion ; and as a readier mode of counteracting its effects than the resort to argument, the author was summoned before the High Court of Commissioners, and, after various threats, compelled to recant his sentiments.

Another class of dissenters which took its rise about this

time, was the Society of Independents, which grew out of the Brownists. Its name is derived from the system of church government, in which each congregation formed a distinct body, regulating its own affairs, judging of the fitness of persons applying for membership, and of the propriety of expelling such as walked disorderly, independently of all others. Their doctrines agreed in the main with those of the other dissenters. During the times of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, they were distinguished by their attachment to toleration, which the Presbyterians denounced as "an hideous monster, the great Diana of the Independents." They were not, however constant to their own principles; for, when they subsequently acquired the power, they exercised considerable severity toward both Friends and Baptists. They received the patronage and support of Oliver Cromwell, and are often mentioned in connection with the history of Friends.

At a very early period of the Reformation, the subject of water baptism appears to have attracted the serious attention of pious men, and their researches into it led some of them to differ from the generally received opinions respecting it.

From Fuller's Church History it appears Wickliffe held "That wise men leave that as impertinent which is not plainly expressed in Scripture; that those are foolish and presumptuous who affirm that infants are not saved if they die without baptism; and that baptism does not confer [grace], but only signifies grace which was given before. He also denied that all sins are abolished in baptism; asserted that children may be saved without baptism, and that the baptism of water profiteth not without the baptism of the Spirit."

During the fifteenth century, there were a number of persons in England who denied the necessity of water baptism, and held "That Christian people were sufficiently baptized in the blood of Christ, and needed no water; and that the sacrament of baptism with water, used in the church, is but a light matter, and of small effect." Some of these suffered death by fire for adherence to their principles; and for a long period afterwards, those who entertained similar views were the ob-

jects of severe persecution. In the sixteenth century, the Society of Baptists or Anabaptists took its rise. They objected to infant baptism as unauthorized by Scripture, and rebaptized those adults whom they considered as believers and admitted to the privileges of their communion. Besides their peculiar views on this subject, some of them held war to be inconsistent with Christianity, and doubted the lawfulness of oaths under the gospel dispensation. They also insisted that the gospel ought to be free, and denied the right of tithes or other compulsory maintenance for its ministers. They were generally persons of great seriousness of mind and strictness of deportment, searching the Scriptures diligently; and being wearied with the ceremonies and impositions of men, were desirous to practise that form of religion only which they believed to be sanctioned by our Lord and his apostles.

Their views of the Christian ministry did not make it essential that those who took part therein should prepare for it by the acquisition of learning, but gave liberty for any to speak a word, either in doctrine or exhortation, who believed themselves called thereto and qualified by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some were zealously opposed to a hireling ministry, declaiming against it in their preaching, by which they subjected themselves to severe sufferings. Many of this persuasion were imprisoned during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and patiently endured their confinement, showing by their steadfastness under suffering that they were actuated by motives sincerely conscientious. Of this class was the pious John Bunyan, whose imprisonment lasted nearly twelve years.

The first Presbyterian church established in England was in 1572. It consisted of Puritans, (then so called) who, among other things, dissented from the government of the church by bishops, &c., conceiving that by pastors and presbyters or elders to be more consistent with Holy Scripture. They agreed with the Independents, in denying the *divine right* of the bishops to order and direct the congregation; but instead of leaving each distinct, with absolute control over its own members and officers, they associated several churches in one

synod, and a number of these again united in forming a general assembly, which is the supreme ecclesiastical body.

This Society comprised a much larger number of members than either of the others we have mentioned; and the part they acted in the revolution which drove Charles I. from the throne, and finally brought him to the scaffold, as well as in the affairs of government during the interregnum, rendered them sufficiently conspicuous.

The persecutions they endured while the reins of government were in the hands of the Church party, we should suppose would have taught them moderation and charity towards the conscientious dissent of others; but no sooner were they placed in the seat of power than they began to contend for *uniformity* in faith and practice—the Moloch of Christendom, to which many of her choicest sons had been wantonly sacrificed.

So fierce was their opposition to toleration, that after a long conference of a Committee of Parliament, for the purpose of making some agreement by which the Independents might be accommodated in their views of church government, the scheme was necessarily abandoned, because the Presbyterians refused to concede anything. They who but lately had contended against the divine right of the bishops, were now urgent to make all yield to the divine right of presbytery. The ministers of Sion College pronounced toleration “a root of gall and bitterness;” others of the sect declaimed against it as contrary to godliness—opening a door to libertinism and profanity, and that it ought to be rejected as “*soul-poison*.” Liberty of conscience was declared to be the nourisher of all heresies and schisms, and most of the sermons preached before the House of Commons, while the question was under debate, breathed the spirit of persecution, and incited the ruling powers to draw the sword against such as would not conform. The Presbyterians little thought that their own arguments would quickly be used against themselves, and the severity they had exercised upon others returned with full measure into their own bosoms. This was lamentably the case after the restora-



tion, when the Church of England, having regained her power, exercised it with little mercy, in the vain attempt to force men's consciences into a conformity with her prescriptions.

We have now noticed the principal sects which existed at the time our Society arose, and to whom the reader will find allusion made in the writings of Friends. They were all strenuously opposed to the Roman Catholic church; and while King James I. and his son Charles I. were both suspected of favoring that religion, as well as some of the dignitaries of the Episcopal church, the Dissenters availed themselves of every opportunity to show their dislike to it. This contributed not a little to alienate their affections from the throne, and to widen the breach to which their persecution had given rise.

The violation of their natural and civil rights, the disregard of their often-repeated and respectful petitions, and the frequent breach of promises solemnly made, tended to make the Puritans suspicious of James, and induced them to watch with the most jealous eye every encroachment of the crown. The House of Stuart were remarkable for arrogant and arbitrary assumption in virtue of their prerogative. However the exigency of the occasions may extenuate some of their acts, there are others which deserve no milder appellations than tyranny and oppression. Against these the Dissenters inveighed with boldness and vehemence, and, as is usually the case, the cry of oppression rallied to their side a host of partisans, until at length the king had lost the affections of a large portion of his subjects. Instead of pacifying them by some concessions, and soothing their incensed feelings by gentleness and clemency, measures still more harsh and offensive were pursued towards them.

They were punished as factious schismatics—as enemies to the king and government, and inciters of the people to rebellion—were fined, whipped, maimed, imprisoned and banished—enduring almost every species of hardship and suffering which cruelty could suggest. It were no wonder, if men who had felt so severely the abuses of regal power should be in favor of a form of government by which it could be restrained

within more just and reasonable limits, and the rights of the subject be more effectually secured.

The disputes between the Puritans and the Church party, which had been carried on with no little acrimony during the reigns of Elizabeth and James I., increased in violence under Charles, and began to assume the most serious aspect, threatening to destroy the peace of the nation. The Puritans had augmented in numbers and importance, and the flagrant outrages committed upon them produced commiseration in the minds of many who yet were sincere in their attachment to the religion of the national Church. So little regard was had to law or equity in the treatment of them, that their cause gradually became identified with the preservation of the constitution and laws of the country. To be a Puritan was synonymous with an opponent of ecclesiastical domination; of the tyranny and encroachments of royalty, under the convenient plea of prerogative; and to be the advocate of the rights and liberties of the subject. In this way politics and religion became blended, and afterward it was the policy of each party to maintain the connection.

Beside the matters originally contested, new sources of dissatisfaction and other subjects of dispute became involved in the controversy.

Many of the clergy of the Establishment had become corrupt and licentious; they seldom preached, neglected their congregations and places of worship, and were engaged in practices not only unbecoming the sacred character, but, in some cases, even scandalously immoral. They encouraged rather than repressed the licentiousness of the times, and seemed much more addicted to mirth and amusements than to the duties of the ministerial office. Their example, and that of the Court, had a demoralizing effect upon others, especially the lower orders of society.

In order to counteract the opinion that the reformed religion was severe and strict in its requisitions, James published, in 1618, a royal declaration, drawn up by one of the Episcopal bishops, stating, that "for his good people's recreation, his

Majesty's pleasure was, that after the end of Divine service they should not be disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawful recreations, such as dancing, either of men or women, archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any such harmless recreations; nor having May games, whitsonales, or morrice dances, or setting up of May poles, or other sports therewith used, so as the same may be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or let of Divine service."

This was a source of great offence to the Puritans; and when the declaration was republished by Charles, and directed to be read in all the churches, many of the ministers refused to comply.

The license given by the indulgence produced the results which might reasonably have been anticipated. The sports degenerated into noisy and tumultuous revels, with tippling, quarrels, and sometimes even murder. These disorders grew to such a height that the justices, in some counties, petitioned the judges of the courts to suppress them, which they did. But Archbishop Laud, then primate of England, summoned the judges before the king and council, for invading the Episcopal jurisdiction. A sharp reprimand and an order to revoke the prohibition was the result. The archbishop taking the matter into his own hands, was informed by the bishop of Bath and Wells, within whose diocese the prohibition had been enforced, that the restoration of the wakes and revels, &c., would be very acceptable to the gentry, *clergy*, and common people; in proof of which he had procured the signatures of seventy-two clergymen; and believed, if he had sent for an hundred more, he could have had the consent of them all. It was determined to continue them, and the king forbade the justices interfering with the people. It may readily be supposed that such proceedings would have a powerful influence in promoting licentiousness, when, in addition to the command of their king, the ministers of religion joined in encouraging practices to which the depraved inclinations of the human heart alone furnished strong excitement. We may safely rank this among the causes which contributed to promote the

immorality and corruption which so lamentably overspread the nation, and gave rise to the close and sharp reproof which our early Friends so often found it their duty to administer.

The few Parliaments which James and Charles assembled evinced a disposition to apply some remedy to the religious dissensions and grievances which distracted the nation. This was an interference so little agreeable to the Crown that they were speedily prorogued, and a long period suffered to elapse before another was called, which gave rise to the suspicion that the monarch intended to govern by prerogative only, and without the intervention of a Parliament.

The condition of the nation when Charles came to the throne was melancholy indeed. It was torn by internal dissensions, and the affections of a large portion of the people alienated from the king by oppression and injustice. The encroachments of the Crown—the continued encouragement given to Papists, the unmitigated persecution of the Puritans, and of such as had the magnanimity and courage to resist the arbitrary measures of the court and its minions, together with the failure of some of his military enterprises, tended to increase the murmurs, and to rouse the spirit of those who regarded the liberties and the religion of the country. Influenced by mistaken notions of royal prerogative, and misguided by his counsellors, Charles, instead of softening the spirits of the Puritans by some concessions, proceeded to still greater lengths, until the minds of many of his subjects were prepared for any change which promised to restore to them their civil and religious rights. From this state of things it was but a short step to open warfare, and accordingly the nation was soon involved in a civil war, which resulted in bringing Charles to the scaffold, and setting up a new form of government. Numerous negotiations for a settlement of the religious differences took place, but neither the king nor the Parliament being willing to accede to the terms proposed by the other, in 1642 they appealed to the sword to settle a controversy which had hitherto been managed only by words. During the course of the war, which continued with various suc-



cess for several years, the king was often reduced to great extremities, and at last falling into the hands of the Parliament, he was brought to trial before his avowed enemies, and condemned to be beheaded as a traitor. This cruel sentence was carried into execution early in 1648.

It was in 1646, during the prevalence of the civil and religious commotions, that GEORGE FOX commenced his labors as a minister of the Gospel, being then in the 23rd year of his age.

After the death of the king the nation was without any legal form of government; but the Parliament which had assumed the power, and exercised it at the commencement of the war, still continued to govern. The Presbyterians had the control of affairs chiefly in their hands, and proceeded to model the religion of the nation to suit their peculiar views. Instead of the liturgy of the Church of England they set up the Directory for Public Worship; and, forgetting the severity of their own sufferings for non-conformity, when others were in power, they now set about compelling all to comply with their established forms. The arguments they had used against persecution for religion, when smarting under the lash of the Episcopal Church, were urged upon them in vain. Having the power in their hands, they appeared to consider it as a sufficient authority for coercing others to adopt that form of worship and system of doctrines which they had determined to be the best. Never did religious toleration seem to be less understood, or the great right of liberty of conscience more wantonly disregarded.

But while the Parliament was acting in conformity with these narrow and bigoted opinions, principles of a contrary character were at work in the army, where the Independents predominated, and carried with them their wonted liberality toward the conscientious dissent of others. Against this latitude of indulgence the Presbyterians declared with great earnestness, as a source of innumerable evils and tending to the destruction of all religion. A long conference took place between the two parties, for the purpose of making some ar-

rangement by which the Independent form of worship and discipline could be included ; but such was the pertinacity of the Presbyterian faction, that they refused to yield anything, and the scheme was abandoned as hopeless.

This arbitrary and oppressive course rendered the sect unpopular ; and the Independents, finding they were not likely to obtain much from the Parliament, and having the army on their side, with Oliver Cromwell at its head, he put an end to the Commonwealth and the Parliament together, in the year 1653—the former having continued a little more than four years, and the latter sat as a legislative body, with some short intermissions, for thirteen years.

It was not long ere Cromwell and his officers struck out a new form of government ; and in the latter end of 1653 he was declared Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland, &c. The principles of the new government, relative to religion, were more liberal and Christian than any which preceded it. The articles of the constitution embracing that subject contain the following, viz:—

“That the Christian religion contained in the Scriptures be held forth and recommended as the public profession of these nations.

“That none be compelled to conform to the public religion, by penalties or otherwise ; but that endeavors be used to win them by sound doctrine and the example of a good conversation.

“That such as profess faith in God, by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, and discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in, the profession of their faith, and the exercise of their religion ; so as they abuse not this liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of the public peace on their parts ; provided, this liberty be not extended to Popery or Prelacy, or to such as, under a profession of Christ, hold forth and practice licentiousness.”

Creditable as these provisions are to the enlightened views of religious toleration, entertained by those who framed them,

they are still defective, in making exceptions to two classes of professors. Had they been faithfully carried out in practice, they would have saved much suffering for consciences' sake, both to Friends and the Baptists. For however favorable the Protector was to granting liberty of conscience to all, it was not the case with the magistrates, justices, and others, in whose hands the execution of the laws was placed. From the cupid-ity or intolerance of these, Friends were often interrupted in the exercise of their religion, and punished, because they could not swear or pay tithes, though to a much less degree than was afterwards the case. ]

Toward the close of Cromwell's government he was again declared Protector, under new articles of government, in which an attempt was made to narrow the grounds of toleration, by a more close definition of the doctrines to be professed.

In the opening of the second session of the Parliament, in 1657, the Lord Commissioner Fiennes "warns the House of the rock on which many had split, which was a spirit of imposing upon men's consciences, in things wherein God leaves them a latitude, and would have them free."—"As God is no respecter of persons, so He is no respecter of forms; but in what form soever the spirit of imposition appears, He will testify against it. If men, though otherwise good, will turn ceremony into substance, and make the kingdom of Christ consist in circumstances, in discipline, and in forms, . . . in vain do they protest against the persecution of God's people, when they make the definition of God's people so narrow that their persecution is as broad as any other, and usually more fierce, because edged with a sharp temper of spirit." "It is good to hold forth a public profession of the truth, but not so as to exclude those that cannot come up to it in all points, from the privilege that belongs to them as Christians, much less from the privilege that belongs to them as men."

These just sentiments, which appeared to be gaining ground in the minds of men, were soon to receive a check, by the change of rulers. In 1658 Oliver Cromwell died, and was succeeded by his son Richard, who, finding the difficulties

and perplexities of balancing the power of rival parties and conducting the affairs of State little suited either to his capacity or his inclination, resigned his high and responsible station, after having occupied it only eight months.

A short interregnum ensued, and in 1669 the kingdom was restored to the house of Stuart, by proclaiming Charles II.

These frequent changes in the government had a tendency to keep up the unsettlement which had long agitated the nation, as well as those violent party feelings and prejudices which the political and religious struggles had engendered. Friends took no part in the revolutions of government—their principles forbade them putting down or setting up, and taught them to live peaceably, as good citizens, under whatever power the Ruler of the universe permitted to be established over them. But though peaceable and non-resisting in their conduct, they were neither idle nor unconcerned spectators of the course of events. \*Believing that righteousness was the only security for a nation's stability and prosperity, they earnestly enforced on the Parliament and Protector, as well as the monarchs who succeeded, the suppression of vice and immorality, the equal administration of justice, and the removal of all oppression. The addresses made to those in authority by George Fox, Edward Burrough, and others, are marked with innocent boldness and good sense, delivered in a style of great frankness and honesty. Nor did they omit to warn them of the consequences which would ensue if they failed to perform the Divine will, predicting with clearness the overthrow of Oliver's government, and some other changes which occurred.

In his declaration issued from Breda, on the eve of his sailing for England to assume the crown, Charles held this conciliatory language, calculated to allay the fears of those who dreaded the restoration of the hierarchy: "We do also declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion, in matters of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom."



But plausible as are these promises, and sincere as the king might have been in making them, the event proved how little reliance was to be placed upon the royal word. Devoted to his own pleasures, and with too little application or industry to examine the opinions of his advisers, or inquire into the sufferings sustained by his subjects, he permitted the clergy to pursue their own measures for the promotion of the church, who took care to return the measure of persecution meted to them under the Commonwealth and Protectorate, heaped up and running over, into the bosoms of the Dissenters. Conformity was rigidly enforced, and, not satisfied with the existing statutes for punishing those who dared to differ in their consciences from the prescribed standard, new and more oppressive laws were procured.

The persecution fell with peculiar severity on Friends, who were suspected of being unfriendly to the restoration of the king, from their refusal to take any oath, and consequently the oath of allegiance to the crown—though they repeatedly offered instead their most solemn declarations to the same effect.

The peaceable and unresisting spirit which governed the conduct of Friends seemed to embolden their persecutors to oppress them without color of law or justice, knowing they had nothing to fear from the law of retaliation, and that but few could be found to plead their cause or espouse the defence of their rights.

To give some color to the severities practised against them, pretexts were drawn from supposed violations of the regulations of civil policy—"A Christian exhortation to an assembly, after the priest had done and the worship was over, was denominated interrupting public worship and disturbing the priest in his office; an honest testimony against wickedness in the streets or market-place, was styled a breach of the peace; and their appearing before the magistrates covered, a contempt of authority; hence proceeded fines, imprisonments, and spoiling of goods. Nay, so hot were some of the magistrates for persecution, even in Cromwell's time, that by an un-

paralleled and most unjust misconstruction of the law against vagrants, they tortured with cruel whippings and exposed in the stocks the bodies both of men and women of good estate and reputation, merely because they went under the denomination of Quakers."

Several obsolete statutes were brought to bear most heavily upon Friends, though originally enacted with a view of reaching the Papists, who refused to conform to the established religion. Among these was an act passed in the thirty-second year of Henry VIII.'s reign, against subtracting or withholding tithes; obliging justices to commit obstinate defendants to prison until they should find sufficient security for their compliance.—The laws made in Elizabeth's reign for enforcing a uniformity of worship, authorizing the levy of a fine of one shilling per week for the use of the poor, from such as did not resort to some church of the established religion every Sabbath or holy day,—and also another, establishing a forfeiture of twenty pounds per month for the like default. A third law empowered the officers to seize all the goods, or a third part of the lands, of every such offender for the fine of twenty pounds. And as if these were not sufficiently severe, another, enacted in the thirty-fifth year of Queen Elizabeth, obliging offenders in the like case to abjure the realm, on pain of death, was used against Friends.

All these laws were revived, and attempts made to enforce them in the cases of Friends, though it was well known they were designed to bear upon the Papists. As Friends could not conscientiously pay tithes, believing that the ministry of the gospel should be free, according to the express injunction of Christ to his apostles, "Freely ye have received, freely give," great havoc was made of their property by the rapacious priests.

The Society of Friends viewed the positive command of our Lord, "Swear not at all," corroborated by the exhortation of the Apostle James, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by Heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath," as being of indispensable obligation, and entirely

precluding the Christian from taking an oath on any occasion whatever.

Soon after Charles II. came to the throne the acts made in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, requiring the subject to take the oath of allegiance and supremacy, were revived, and visited upon Friends with great oppression.

In 1661 the Parliament passed another act, aimed directly at the Society, providing that any Quaker refusing to take an oath, when lawfully tendered, or who should maintain, in writing or otherwise, the unlawfulness of taking an oath; or if five or more Quakers, above the age of sixteen years, should assemble for religious worship, they should forfeit five pounds for the first offence, or suffer three months' imprisonment; doubling the penalty for the second offence; and for the third they were to abjure the realm or be transported.

The insurrection of the "Fifth Monarchy Men," as they were called, was the occasion of fresh persecution to Friends. They were a company of infatuated men, who, supposing that the one thousand years of Christ's reign on earth, mentioned in Rev. xx., was just commencing, rose in arms and ran about the streets of London crying out that they were going to overthrow the government of King Charles and set up King Jesus. Although there was not the shadow of reason for connecting the Society in any way with this wild insurrection, yet the king made it the pretext for issuing his proclamation for the suppression of all unlawful conventicles, or meetings for religious purposes, designating particularly those of the Anabaptists and Quakers. This encouraged the profane and irreligious populace to assail the meetings of Friends, and inflict upon them the grossest outrages and cruelties.

Severe as were the sufferings of Friends under the operation of these oppressive laws, their constancy was not shaken. They fearlessly and openly met for the solemn duty of Divine worship, nothing daunted by the terrors which threatened them. This Christian boldness exasperated their enemies, especially the persecuting priests and magistrates, and another law was procured more prompt and terrible in its operation. It de-

clared the statute of 35th Elizabeth in full force; and that every person taken at a meeting consisting of more than five, beside the household, should suffer three months' imprisonment or pay a fine of five pounds, on conviction before two justices—double the penalty for the second offence; and being convicted of a third, before the justices at the Quarter Sessions, should be transported for seven years, or pay one hundred pounds fine—and in case they returned or escaped, they should be adjudged felons and sentenced to death. It also empowered sheriffs, justices of the peace, and persons commissioned by them, to hunt out and break up all religious meetings, other than those of the established religion, and take into custody such of the company as they saw fit. Persons allowing such meetings in their houses, barns, &c., to be subject to the same penalties and forfeitures as other offenders. Such as were sentenced to transportation were to be sent over sea at their own expense; and in default of ability to pay, to be sold for five years to defray the charges. Married women taken at meetings to be imprisoned for a term not exceeding twelve months, or their husbands to pay for their redemption not exceeding forty pounds.

The next enactment by which Friends suffered was commonly known by the name of the Oxford five-mile act. It was aimed at the Presbyterian and other non-conforming ministers, requiring them to take an oath that it was not lawful under any pretence to take up arms against the king, and that they would not at any time endeavor to procure any alteration in the government of church or state. Such as refused to take the oath were declared incapable of teaching any school, public or private, under penalty of forty pounds. All non-conforming ministers were likewise prohibited from coming within five miles of any city, town, or borough sending members to Parliament, or within five miles of any place where they had officiated as ministers, unless it might be in passing along a public highway, under a forfeiture of forty pounds; one-third of which went to the informer.

The refusal of Friends to take an oath brought their minis-



ters within the scope of this law, and fines, distrainments, and imprisonments were the consequences.

In 1670 there appeared to be a disposition among some of the officers of government to put a stop to persecution. The king, on several occasions, had shown dislike to it; but being opposed by the bishops and Parliament, he had not the firmness or resolution to withstand their influence. The former act for suppressing religious meetings having expired, a new one was prepared and passed, making the penalty five shillings for the first offence and ten for the second; the preachers or teachers in such meetings to forfeit twenty pounds for the first and forty pounds for the second offence; and twenty pounds penalty for suffering a meeting to be held in a house or barn. A single justice was authorized to convict on the oath of two witnesses, and the fines to be forthwith levied on the offender's goods, and in case of his poverty, on the goods of any other offender present at the same meeting; provided the amount so levied shall not exceed ten pounds for one meeting—one-third of all the fines to go to the informer, as a reward for his services. Justices, constables and other officers were authorized to break open and enter any house, or place, where they might be informed there was a conventicle, and search for and take into custody all persons found assembled there. If any justice of the peace refused to perform the duties prescribed in the act, he was to forfeit one hundred pounds, and every constable five pounds. And it was further enacted, that "all clauses in the law should be construed most largely and beneficially for the suppressing of conventicles, and for the justification and encouragement of all persons to be employed in the execution thereof."

A more unjust and oppressive law could scarcely be conceived. In the hope of rioting on the spoils of the Quakers' goods, unprincipled men lurked about their dwellings, lodged information against them on the most frivolous pretences, and swore falsely to procure their conviction; the facility of which was greatly promoted by the privacy of the trial, and resting the decision with a single justice, himself often the accomplice

of the informer and the sharer of the prey. It would be difficult to conceive a scene of more extensive rapine and plunder, in time of peace and under color of law, than the execution of this act produced throughout the nation. Many Friends were reduced from competency to destitution of the very necessities of life.

In 1672 Charles issued his declaration of indulgence, by which, in virtue of his royal prerogative, as supreme in ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs, he assumed to suspend the operation of the penal laws against the non-conformists. The right of the Sovereign to exercise this power was warmly contested. Some of the Dissenters, and especially the Presbyterians, who were extremely jealous of the Papists, and unfavorable to general liberty of conscience, were not forward to accept the boon thus offered, and even wrote against it, on the ground that it would sanction the exercise of the dispensing power in the king.

Friends had suffered more severely during the preceding persecutions than any other class of Dissenters. They had stood their ground with unflinching intrepidity, when others fled before the storm. They contended that liberty of conscience was the natural right of all men, and that every interference of the civil power with the peaceable exercise of conscientious duty was contrary to Christianity and to sound principles of government. They meddled not with the politics of the day, nor professed to be skilled in questions of royal prerogative. The knowledge that hundreds of their brethren were unjustly lying in prisons, while their helpless families were exposed to the rapacity of merciless informers, was an argument sufficiently powerful to induce them to accept the relief which the king's declaration afforded. An application was accordingly made to the Crown for the discharge of those who had been imprisoned for conscience's sake; and such was the favorable opinion produced by the constancy and uniformly peaceable and consistent conduct of the Society, that a warrant was readily obtained for their liberation. The success of this application afforded Friends an opportunity of

proving the sincerity of their opinions in favor of universal toleration and charity. There were other Dissenters confined in the same prisons, and their solicitors requesting the aid of Friends in their behalf, they cheerfully accorded it, and included the names of those prisoners in the same instrument by which their own members were relieved from bonds.

The respite which the declaration afforded was of short duration; for in the following year the Parliament compelled the king to revoke it, in consequence of which the sufferings of Friends were renewed, though not to the same extent as before.

If the calamities in which Friends bore so large a share had no other good effect, they evidently tended to convince the nation of the folly of persecuting men for differences of opinion. More than thirty years of suffering had passed over, and not a single Quaker had been induced by it to abandon his profession—they were as prompt and diligent as ever in the open performance of their religious duties, and as ready patiently to submit to the penalties of unrighteous laws. They never resorted to violence or retaliation, relying on the justice of their cause, the truth and soundness of their arguments, and their peaceable and blameless conduct to effect a change in the minds of those in power. This change now began to be apparent.

In 1680 a bill was introduced to Parliament for exempting Dissenters from penal laws. Friends lost no time in presenting themselves before the committee as the advocates of such a measure, and urging the insertion of such clauses as would afford relief to the members of the Society on the subject of oaths. So successful were they in these endeavors that they obtained an amendment to the bill, admitting a declaration of fidelity instead of the oath of allegiance. But the state of affairs was not ripe for such an important change, and the bill was lost. Another, however, passed both Houses, exempting Dissenters from the operation of the statute of the 35th of Elizabeth. But when it should have been presented to the king for his assent, it was not to be found, having been

secreted purposely, as was believed, to defeat the measure. In the next year the Parliament passed the following resolutions, viz :

“1. Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House that the acts of Parliament made in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, against Popish recusants, ought not to be extended against Protestant Dissenters.

“2. Resolved, that it is the opinion of this House that the prosecution of Protestant Dissenters upon the penal laws is at this time grievous to the subject, a weakening of the Protestant interest, an encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the peace of the kingdom.”

These votes showed the growing feeling in favor of Dissenters, and mark the gradual progress of those principles of religious liberty which were more fully recognized in 1688, by the passage of the *Toleration Act*, under William and Mary ; a measure which afforded great relief to Friends, though they were still subject to persecutions for tithes and for refusing to swear. After repeated applications to the king and Parliament, a bill was brought into the House, in 1695, and finally passed early in the following year, allowing the solemn affirmation of a Friend instead of an oath.

Having taken a cursory view of the laws under which the persecution of the Society was carried on, it is proper we should briefly allude to the state of religion in the nation at the time of, and subsequently to the rise of Friends.

In treating this subject, the statements of historians are of the most opposite and contradictory character. Clarendon and others, who espouse the royal cause, are unwilling to accord to the Puritans either sincerity or truth. They allege that canting and hypocrisy were the order of the day—that a high profession of religion, and great pretensions to sanctity and strictness, were the road to preferment and power, and were therefore assumed from ambitious or interested motives.

The advocates of the Puritan party, on the other hand, represent the established Church as extremely corrupt—her ministers destitute of even the profession of religion, and in



many cases guilty of scandalous and immoral behavior. That she enforced by severe penalties a compliance with superstitious ceremonies, while she tolerated practices of evil tendency, and discountenanced everything like zeal or fervor in religion. Allowance, however, is to be made for the bias of party attachments, and the distorted views which prejudice gives of the character of an opponent. That great laxity of morals, as well as neglect of their prescribed duties, had crept into the clergy of the Church of England, cannot be denied. Many of them never preached, and addicted themselves to hunting and other sports, frequenting alehouses and taverns, and indulging in drunkenness and other licentious practices.

In 1640 the Parliament appointed a committee to inquire into the conduct of the ministers of religion, for removing scandalous ministers and putting others in their places, as well as to procure ministers for places where there were none. A part of the proceedings of this committee was published, containing cases of one hundred who had been tried and ejected, from which it appears that eighty of them were convicted of immoralities. The reputation of some of them has been defended by writers on the side of the Church, though they admit that others were very vicious, and the offences of several so foul that it is a shame even to report them. Baxter says, that "In all the counties where he was acquainted, six to one, at least, if not many more, that were sequestered by the committee, were by the oaths of witnesses proved insufficient or scandalous, or especially guilty of drunkenness and swearing. This I know, says he, will displease the party, but I am sure that this is true."

The writings of Friends frequently mention ministers whose characters were similar to those alluded to in the above statements; and if the language sometimes used by members of the Society in addressing them appears severe, an ample reason for it is furnished by the disgraceful conduct to which too many were addicted. It is not designed, however, to involve the whole body in indiscriminate censure. There were doubtless, among them persons of sincere piety and exempla-

ry lives, who, according to the degree of light afforded them, endeavored to discharge their duties with fidelity.

When the reins of government came into the hands of the Puritans, efforts were made to procure a reformation in the morals of the nation. The licentious practices which had grown out of the encouragement given to games, sports, and revels, on the First-day of the week, were checked. Those vain amusements, together with stage plays, were prohibited; the observance of the First-day was strictly enforced, and regular attendance at places of worship enjoined.

It was certainly a period when the profession of religion, and a compliance with its exterior requisitions, were held in high esteem; though it cannot be denied that there were some who put on the garb in order more effectually to accomplish their ambitious and sinister designs. However just the severe censures of some historians may be with reference to these individuals, they cannot with fairness be applied to others; nor should the whole mass of Puritans be stigmatized in consequence of the duplicity of some particular professors.

The following observations from Orme's life of Owen will serve to illustrate the religious condition of the nation during the Protectorship of Oliver, viz:

"Of the true state of religion during the period of Cromwell's government it is difficult to form an accurate estimate. Judging from certain external appearances, and comparing them with the times which followed, the opinion must be highly favorable. Religion was the language and garb of the court; prayer and fasting were fashionable exercises; a profession of religion was the road to preferment; not a play was acted in all England for many years; and from the prince to the peasant and common soldier the features of Puritanism were universally exhibited. Judging again from the wildness and extravagance of various opinions and practices which then obtained, and from the fanatical slang and hypocritical grimace which were adopted by many, merely to answer a purpose, our opinion will necessarily be unfavorable. The truth perhaps lies between the extremes of unqualified censure

and undistinguishing approbation. Making all due allowance for the infirmity and sin which were combined with the profession of religion—making every abatement for the inducements which then encouraged the use of a religious vocabulary—admitting that there was even a large portion of pure fanaticism, still we apprehend an immense mass of genuine religion will remain. There must have been a large quantity of sterling coin when there was such a circulation of counterfeit. In the best of the men of that period there was, doubtless, a tincture of unscriptural enthusiasm, and the use of a phraseology revolting to the taste of modern time; in many perhaps there was nothing more; but to infer that therefore all was base, unnatural deceit, would be unjust and unwise. ‘A reformation,’ says Jortin, ‘is seldom carried on without heat and vehemence which borders on enthusiasm. As Cicero has observed, that there never was a great man *sine afflatu divino* [without a divine inbreathing], so in times of religious contests there seldom was a man very zealous for liberty, civil and ecclesiastical, and a declared active enemy to insolent tyranny, blind superstition, political godliness, bigotry, and pious frauds, who had not a fervency of zeal which led him, on some occasions, beyond the bounds of sober, temperate reason.’”

From the dawn of the Reformation, the spirit of religious inquiry had been kept alive and strengthened by the very efforts used to suppress it. The shackles with which priestcraft had attempted to bind the human mind had been in some measure broken, and an earnest desire awakened after the saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. This was increased by the troubles of the times. The nation was torn by intestine strife. Civil war, with all its attendant evils, raged throughout the country, and the property, as well as the lives of the subjects, were at the mercy of a lawless soldiery. Many were stripped of their outward possessions, reduced to poverty and want, and often obliged to abandon their homes and flee for the preservation of their lives.

This melancholy state of affairs had a tendency to loosen their attachments from the world, by showing the precarious

tenure of all earthly enjoyments, and to induce men to press after those substantial and permanent consolations which are only to be found in a religious life.

Where the ecclesiastical and civil power were so frequently shifting hands, and the national form of religion changing with every change of rulers, new sects and opinions arising, and different teachers of religion inviting their attention, and saying, "Lo, here is Christ! or lo, He is there!" it is not surprising that the honest and sincere inquirers after the right way of the Lord should be greatly perplexed. The effect of these commotions was to wean men from a dependence on each other in the work of religion, and to prepare their minds for the reception of the important truth that, however useful instrumental means of divine appointment may be, it is the glory of the gospel dispensation that the Lord, by his Holy Spirit, is himself the teacher of his people. Previous to the commencement of George Fox's ministry, many had withdrawn from all the acknowledged forms of public worship, and were engaged in diligently searching the Holy Scriptures, with prayer for right direction in the path of duty, and frequently meeting in select companies for the worship of Almighty God and their mutual edification. Among these the preaching of George Fox found a ready entrance, and many of them joined in religious profession with him.

The period of which we have been speaking may justly be denominated the age of polemic strife. The war itself had been commenced ostensibly for the redress of religious grievances. In the camp and the field, as well as by the fireside, religion was the absorbing theme. The Baptists and Independents encouraged persons to preach who had not studied for the ministry nor been formally ordained; and numbers of this description engaged in the vocation with unwearied assiduity, often holding meetings in the fields or preaching in the market-places. The Parliament army abounded with them, and preaching, praying, and disputing on points of doctrine were daily to be heard among both officers and soldiers. Public disputations were also common, and were often con-



ducted with a warmth of temper and harshness of language which seemed hardly consistent with the meek and gentle spirit of the Gospel. Modern ideas of courtesy and propriety can scarcely tolerate the latitude of expression which the antagonists sometimes indulged toward each other, not only on these occasions, but in their controversial essays.

Amid so much strife and contention, and the intemperate feelings naturally arising out of them, it is not surprising that even good men should have formed erroneous opinions of the character and sentiments of each other. They judged rather by the impulses of prejudice and sectarian feeling than by the law of truth and Christian kindness. In the heat of discussion the mind is not in a condition to form a sound and correct judgment. The weakness or mistakes of an opponent are seen through a medium which greatly magnifies them, while his virtues are either depreciated or distorted into errors. The controversial writings of the times furnish evidence of the existence of these uncharitable feelings among nearly all denominations of professors, and he who reads them with the enlightened and liberal views of religious toleration which now happily obtain, will observe with regret men of unquestionable piety unchristianizing each other for opinion's sake, and lament that such monuments of human frailty should have been handed down to posterity.

Those who judge of the writings of the first Friends by modern standards of literary excellence and courtesy, are apt to censure them for their severity. Much, however, may be said in extenuation of them. Friends were particularly obnoxious to the hatred of the clergy, in consequence of their unyielding opposition to a ministry of human appointment, to the system of tithes and a forced maintenance. Their views on these subjects, which they fearlessly published, struck directly at priestcraft. Deeply affected by the corruption which they saw among many who assumed the sacred office, they boldly declaimed against their cupidity, licentiousness, and persecution. This course drew upon them a host of enemies, who were not very nice in the choice of means to lessen their

influence and prejudice their characters. Friends were assailed with calumny and misrepresentation; opinions and practices were charged upon them of which they solemnly declared themselves innocent; yet they were again and again renewed with the boldest effrontery. The conduct of some of the visionary sects which arose about the same time was unjustly imputed to them, and every advantage that could be taken was eagerly embraced to prejudice their religious profession. Harassed by this unchristian conduct, and at the same time smarting under a cruel persecution, they must have been more than human if the weakness of nature had never betrayed them into an unguarded or intemperate expression. A comparison, however, with other controversialists of the times will show that they were not peculiar in this respect. It should be recollected, too, that language, as well as the regulations of decorum toward opponents, have undergone a great change since that time. Expressions which sound harsh and offensive to modern ears, were then considered strictly within the limits of propriety, and appear to have given no offence to those who were the objects of them. This license of the tongue and pen is found also in the Parliamentary debates, and appears to have characterized those times of excitement and re-  
crimination.

Another practice which sometimes prevailed was that of going into the places of worship and addressing the congregation during the time of service. Custom had sanctioned the practice, of asking the minister at the close of the service respecting difficult or abstruse points, which required explanation. This liberty was exercised to a much greater extent during the period of which we have been speaking, and not unfrequently a dispute followed. The overthrow of the national form of worship, and the consequent termination of ecclesiastical restrictions, had a tendency to induce greater latitude in this respect than comports with our ideas of good order. The manner in which Friends speak of those cases in which they went to places of worship other than their own, induces the belief that it was not extraordinary; and in most,

if not all instances, in which violence to their persons was the consequence, it appears to have been the doctrine delivered, rather than the time and manner of communicating it, which called forth the angry passions of the assailants. Friends were not alone in this course, and sometimes their ministrations were so acceptable to the audience as to induce them to remain after the stated preacher had withdrawn.

The religious men of that day are commonly charged with evincing a fanatical and enthusiastic spirit, and Friends of course come in for a large share of the censure. To deny that there were cases in which such a spirit was evinced would be folly; but to brand whole communities of professing Christians with those epithets on account of the excesses of a few members would be extremely unjust. It is, moreover, difficult for us to judge correctly of the exigencies of the church during that period, and what degree of energy and fervor was requisite to carry those holy men through the work of their day. We know that a much stronger feeling must have been necessary to stem the torrent of abuse and persecution, and carry forward the reformation, than the present day of outward ease and liberty would probably elicit. It is, moreover, highly unreasonable to allow men of the world their fervor and self-devotion in the pursuit of the comparatively trivial objects of their choice, and yet censure them in those who are pressing after the momentous concerns of salvation with an earnestness becoming their vast importance.

In the succeeding reign of Charles II., the face of things was greatly changed. The Court was devoted to licentious pleasures, while religion and religious things were made a mere laughing stock. The restoration opened the very floodgates of vice and wickedness. "A spirit of extravagant joy," says Bishop Burnet, "spread over the nation, that brought in with it the throwing off the very professions of virtue and piety: all ended in entertainments and drunkenness, which overrun the three kingdoms to such a degree that it very much corrupted all their morals. Under the cover of drinking the king's health, there were great disorders and great riots every

where." This lamentable state of things was the source of deep concern to Friends, several of whom addressed the king on the subject, reminding him of the fate of Sodom and Gomorrha; and that in his own dominions wickedness had reached a height which must certainly call down the Divine displeasure. Many Friends were engaged to go to the courts of justice and exhort the officers to the discharge of their duties in endeavoring to suppress it; they also preached against it in the markets and places of public entertainment. So contrary were their example and precepts to the prevailing corruptions, and so plain and fearless the rebukes they administered, that they were subjected to much abuse; yet in many cases they were the happy instruments of turning sinners from the evil of their ways. The licentiousness which had infected nearly all ranks of society, and was tolerated, if not countenanced, by too many whose duty it was to repress it, furnished ample reasons for the close and even sharp expostulations which are found about this time in the writings of Friends.

In taking a view of the religious principles of the Society, it is proper to remark that they have always scrupulously adhered to the position of proving their doctrines by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, rejecting whatever was contrary to the tenor of those Divine writings. In their ministerial labors their constant appeal to the people against the existing errors was to Holy Scripture. It is a well known fact that George Fox carried a Bible with him, which he frequently used in his preaching; and in the meeting-house which he gave to Friends of Swarthmore he placed a Bible, for the convenience of reference and perusal by those who attended the meeting. Samuel Bownas also carried a copy of the Holy Scriptures with him, and sometimes preached with it in his hand; and there is reason to believe that the practice was not uncommon. These facts contradict the groundless accusation which is some times made, that those worthy men did not acknowledge the paramount authority of Holy Scripture over all other writings. The Society has always accepted them fully and literally, as a rule of faith and practice under the



enlightening influences of the Spirit of Truth, by which they were given forth. Such is the high character they have ever attached to the sacred text that they uniformly refused to accept instead of it the glosses and interpretations of school men. It was thus they were led to the observance of the positive commands of our Saviour not to swear or fight, even in self defence, as well as to the strict and literal acceptance of those precepts which forbid worldly compliance and indulgence; from the force of which too many professors have sought to escape. It is true that they recommended their hearers to Christ Jesus the Heavenly Teacher, who, by his Holy Spirit, has come to teach his people himself; yet they were careful to support this recommendation by showing its entire consonance with the whole scope of the Christian dispensation.

But while Friends fully admitted the Divine origin and authority of the Sacred Volume, and acknowledged the richness of the blessing we enjoy in having it preserved and transmitted to us through the goodness of Divine Providence, they dared not put it in the place of Christ, either as regarded honor or office, nor prefer it to the operations and teachings of the Holy Spirit in the heart; errors which they believed they saw in many of the high professors of their day.

They wished the Scriptures of Truth and the Holy Spirit to occupy the places in the work of salvation respectively assigned to them in the Bible itself, and that the honor due to the Author and Giver should not be conferred on the gift. It was for these causes that they pressed on professors the necessity of coming unto Christ, that they might have life, even though versed in the literal knowledge of the Bible. That as its precious truths are not savingly known or appreciated by the unassisted reason of fallen man, so it is necessary to seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, which searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God, to open our understandings and illuminate the darkness of our hearts, and prepare us for their reception. In asserting the superiority of the knowledge thus derived through the operations of the Holy Spirit over that

which is acquired from reading the Sacred Volume by the mere exercise of the unassisted intellectual faculties, Friends were sometimes misunderstood; and charged with denying the Scriptures of Truth, placing their own writings on a level with them, and professing that equally good Scriptures could be written at the present day as those which were penned by Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles. But no sooner were these accusations made than they were met by an unqualified denial, asserting in the fullest and most solemn manner their sincere belief in all that the Scriptures say respecting their Divine origin, authority, and use.

The prominent manner in which they believed themselves called to hold up the important offices of the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation was another source of misapprehension among their opponents. Baxter, in his account of Friends, says of them, "They spake much for the dwelling and working of the Spirit in us, but little of justification and the pardon of sin, and our reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ."

It is not correct to say that Friends "*spake little*" on the great doctrines of justification and remission of sins through Christ Jesus our propitiation, for they frequently and earnestly insisted on them. But finding that these were generally admitted by all Christian professors, while many either entirely denied or undervalued the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, they were engaged to call the attention of the people to this, as the life of true religion; without which the Scriptures could not make them wise unto salvation, and Christ would have died for them in vain. But while thus enforcing this important doctrine of Holy Scripture, they were careful to recognize and acknowledge the whole scope of the Gospel in all its fullness. They declared against that construction of the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction which taught men to believe they could be justified from their sins while they continued in them impenitent; asserting that the very design of Christ's coming in the flesh was to save people *from* their sins, and to destroy the works of the devil. Yet they fully and gratefully acknowledged the mercy of God in giving his dear Son a ransom



and atonement for mankind, that the penitent sinner might be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Many of them were persons who had been highly esteemed for their piety in the Societies with which they had formerly been connected, and several of them had been preachers. In the progress of their religious experience they were convinced that they had been resting too much on a bare belief of what Christ had done and suffered for them when personally on earth, and also in the ceremonies of religion, without sufficiently pressing after the knowledge of "Christ in them the hope of glory;" to feel his righteous government set up in their hearts, and the power of the Holy Spirit giving them the victory over sin in all its motions, and qualifying them to serve God in newness of life. They saw that the Holy Scriptures held up to the view of Christians a state of religious advancement and stability, far beyond that which most of the professors of their day appeared to aim at or admit; a state in which sin was to have no more dominion over them, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had set them free from the law of sin and death. That this was an inward work, not effected by a bare assent of the understanding to the blessed truths contained in the Bible, hearing sermons, dipping or sprinkling in water, or partaking of bread and wine, but a real change of the heart and affections by the power of the Holy Ghost inwardly revealed, regenerating the soul, creating it anew in Christ Jesus, and making all things pertaining to it of God.

Convinced that this great work was necessary to salvation, and yet in great danger of being overlooked amid a round of ceremonial performances, and a high profession of belief in Christ as the propitiation for sins, they zealously preached the doctrine of the new birth, calling their hearers to come to Christ Jesus, the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; that they might experience Him to shine into their hearts, to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The offices of the Holy Ghost, or Comforter, as the guide into all truth, as the unction from the Holy One, which teacheth of all things, and is Truth, and no lie, was the great theme of their contemplation and ministry, and it stands forth no less conspicuously in their writings.

When we turn to the Sacred Volume, and read there the numerous testimonies borne to the great importance of this doctrine in the Gospel plan, we cannot wonder to find it prominently set forth by a people professing eminently the spirituality of religion. But to infer from the fact of their preaching Christ within that they designed in any degree to deny Christ without, or to derogate from any part of the work which in adorable condescension He was graciously pleased to accomplish for us in the prepared body, or from that complete justification from our sins which is obtained through living faith in Him as our sacrifice and Mediator, would be illiberal and unjust.

When such accusations were brought against them by their enemies, they indignantly repelled and denied them; and the official declarations and acts of the Society evince that such opinions were never received or tolerated by it.

In carrying out these views of the spiritual nature of the Gospel, and of that great work in the soul described as "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," the primitive Friends were led to the adoption of their peculiar sentiments respecting water baptism and the use of the bread and wine. They found it declared in the Sacred Volume that as "there is one Lord and one faith," so there is but "one baptism;" and that "the baptism which now saves is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Corresponding with this is the saying of the apostle to the Romans: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Also, that to the

Galatians, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ;" and to the Colossians, where he declares that those who are in Christ are "buried with Him in baptism, wherein, also, ye are risen with Him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Sensible that these blessed effects were not the result of dipping in or sprinkling the body with water, and apprehensive that many professors of religion were trusting to the outward ceremony, as a means of initiating them into the Church of Christ, while neglecting the necessary work of "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," they pressed upon their hearers the necessity of experiencing that one saving baptism which John describes when drawing the distinction between his dispensation and that of Christ "I indeed baptize you with water: but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Convinced that the Gospel is not a dispensation of shadows, but the very substance of the heavenly things themselves, they believed that the true communion of saints consisted in that Divine intercourse which is maintained between our merciful Saviour and the souls of his faithful disciples, agreeable to his own gracious words: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me."

There is a strong tendency in the human mind to substitute the form of religion for the power, and to satisfy the conscience by a cold compliance with exterior performances while the heart remains unchanged. And inasmuch as the baptism of the Holy Ghost and the communion of the body and blood of Christ, of which water baptism and the bread and wine are admitted to be only signs, are not dependent on those outward ceremonies, nor necessarily connected with them, and are declared in Holy Scripture to be effectual to the salvation of the soul, which the signs are not, Friends have always believed it their place and duty to hold forth to the world a clear and decided testimony to the living substance—the spiritual work

of Christ in the soul, and a blessed communion with Him there.

A distinguishing trait in the character of the first Friends was that, amid the great political commotions which prevailed, they attached themselves to neither of the parties, nor entered into any of their ambitious views. It was a principle of their religion to avoid all strife and contention, and to live peaceably under whatever form of government Divine Providence was pleased to permit. When the laws of the land came into collision with their duty to God, and they could not for conscience sake actively comply with their demands, they patiently endured the penalties. When the nation was in a great ferment after the death of Cromwell, George Fox, ever watchful for the welfare of his brethren, addressed a letter exhorting them "to live in love and peace with all men—to keep clear of all the commotions of the world, and not to intermeddle with the powers of the earth, but to let their conversation be in heaven."—"All who pretend to fight for Christ," says he, "are deceived; for his kingdom is not of this world, and therefore his servants do not fight."

Unaided by any alliance with the great or powerful, ridiculed and hated by the world, and everywhere pursued with contempt and cruelty, the principles of Friends silently spread through the kingdom, winning the assent of men who were inferior to none in education, talents or respectability. Amid the severest persecution, when deprived of every temporal comfort, torn from home and all its endearments, with every probability that they should seal the truth of their principles with the sacrifice of their lives, they faltered not. Though all around them looked dark and threatening, yet there was light and peace within;—they not only met their sufferings with patience and fortitude in the unresisting spirit of their Divine Master, but through the goodness of God were so filled with heavenly consolation that they sang for joy even in the extremity of suffering.

Exposed to almost universal hatred and abuse, their names despised and cast out from among men, the disinterested love



they showed for each other excited the admiration even of their enemies. While each one seemed regardless of his own liberty and estate, all were zealous in pleading the cause of their suffering brethren when occasion presented; freely sacrificing their time and property to promote their comfort, and even offering themselves to lie in prison instead of them whom they thought could be less easily spared from their families or the Society.

Such fruits of Christian love and forbearance, under protracted and poignant suffering, unjustly inflicted, have rarely been exhibited to the world; and nothing less than the marvellous extension of Almighty Power could have sustained and carried them through it all, to the peaceful enjoyment of that liberty of conscience for which they nobly contended. Their conduct furnishes the strongest evidence of sincere and devoted attachment to the cause of Christ. It proves that they were true men, earnestly engaged in seeking after truth; while the Divine support they experienced, and the brightness with which they were enabled to hold forth, in their example, the Christian virtues, are no inconsiderable testimonies of the favor of that God whom they delighted to serve.

The character of the founders of the Society has not been duly appreciated, even by many of their successors in religious profession. We look back to the age in which they lived as one of comparative ignorance; and tracing the improvements which have since been made in the arts, and in literature and the sciences, as well as the liberal views of civil and religious liberty which now generally obtain, we are apt to undervalue the wisdom and attainments of our ancestors. But our opinion respecting them will change when we discover how far they were in advance of the times in which they flourished; that though many of them possessed but few of the advantages of literary instruction, yet their minds, enlightened by the influences of the Spirit of Truth, and expanded by Christian benevolence, were prepared to perceive and to promulgate those great moral and religious truths which are considered the peculiar ornament and glory of the present age.

One of the earliest subjects of concern to George Fox was the want of moderation and temperance in eating and drinking. "The Lord showed me," says he, "that I might not eat and drink to make myself wanton, but for health, using the creatures as servants, in their places, to the glory of Him that created them." He also observes that he was engaged "in warning such as kept public houses for entertainment that they should not let people have more drink than would do them good," and in crying against the sin of drunkenness; setting an example of remarkable abstinence in his manner of life. The testimony thus early and zealously enforced has ever since been maintained, and from that period to the present, Friends, as a body, have been a Temperance Society.

No less clear were his views in regard to speaking the *truth* on all occasions, without the use of an oath. "The Lord showed me," says he, "that though the people of the world have mouths full of deceit and changeable words, yet I was to keep to yea and nay in all things, and that my words should be few and savory, seasoned with grace; warning all to deal justly, to speak the truth, to let their yea be yea and their nay nay, and to do unto others as they would have others do unto them; that Christ commanded, Swear not at all; and God, when He bringeth the first begotten into the world, saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him, even Christ Jesus, who saith, Swear not at all. As for the plea that men make for swearing, viz, to end their strife, Christ, who forbids swearing, destroys the devil and his works, who is the author of strife."

The uniform and consistent example of the first Friends in respect to a scrupulous adherence to their word as men of truth, and to strict uprightness in all their dealings, soon gained them a high reputation for those virtues. Their objection to the use of oaths cost them much suffering, but their faithfulness at length triumphed over opposition, and their conscientious scruple was recognized and tolerated by an act of Parliament.

The benevolent and enlightened mind of George Fox was



deeply affected with the sanguinary character of the penal code of Great Britain, and believing that the benign spirit of the Gospel would lead to save men's lives rather than to destroy them, he was engaged to write to the judges and others in authority, "concerning their putting to death for small matters, and to show them how contrary it was to the law of God in old time; for," says he, "I was under great suffering in my spirit because of it." In an address, "to the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England," setting forth a number of particulars "for taking away oppressive laws," &c., he says: "Let no one be put to death for [stealing] cattle, or money, or any outward thing—but let them restore; and mind the law of God, which is equity and measurable, agreeable to the offence."

This is perhaps the earliest account extant of any proposal for lessening the frequency of capital punishments.

The amiable and pacific principles which produced these views in the founder of the Society gave rise to corresponding feelings in the minds of other members. William Penn, in framing the laws of Pennsylvania, mitigated considerably the harshness of the English code, and it is a well known fact that Friends have always been the advocates of a mild system of punishment, coupled with penitentiary regulations.

In the improvement of prisons and prison discipline they also took the lead.

Being frequently confined for his conscientious adherence to the precepts of Christ and his apostles, he had an opportunity of seeing the wretched condition of the jails in England, and of witnessing the demoralizing effects of associating the novice in crime with the hardened offender. His tender feelings were quickly awakened on this interesting subject, and when about twenty-six years of age he published a paper, showing "what a hurtful thing it was for prisoners to lie so long in jail, and how they learned wickedness one of another in talking of their bad deeds;" and inciting the judges of courts to the prompt administration of law, that the prisoners might as quickly as practicable be removed from the influence

of such corrupting examples. In the address to the Parliament, before quoted, he says, "Let none be gaolers that are drunkards, swearers, or oppressors of the people; but such as may be good examples to the prisoners. And let none lie long in jail, for that is the way to spoil people, and to make more thieves; for there they learn wickedness together." Again he says, "Let all jails be in wholesome places, that the prisoners may not lie in the filth and straw like chaff," &c.; and after mentioning some of the nuisances then existing in prisons, he adds, "Let these things be mended."

There are several other recommendations which bespeak the liberality and correctness of his views, such as the following, viz:

"Let all the laws of England be brought into a known tongue." Many of them, as well as the proceedings of courts, were then in the Latin language.

"Let no swearer, nor curser, nor drunkard, bear any office whatever, nor be put in any place."

"Let none keep alehouses or taverns but those who fear God; that will not let the creatures of God be destroyed by drunkenness."

"Let no man keep an alehouse or tavern that keeps bowls, shuffle-boards, or fiddlers, or dice, or cards."

"Let neither beggar, nor blind people, nor fatherless, nor widows, nor cripples, go begging up and down the streets; but that a house may be provided for them all, and also meat, that there may be never a beggar among you."

"And let all this wearing of gold lace and costly attire be ended, and clothe the naked and feed the hungry with the superfluity. And turn not your ear away from the cry of the poor."

About the time that George Fox attained his twenty-sixth year, considerable efforts were made to induce him to join the Parliament army, and a captaincy over a band of newly-raised troops was offered to him. But his religious opinions would not permit him to take up arms in any cause. The ruling principle of his life was "Peace on earth and good will to men."

He whose commands he esteemed of paramount authority, directed his followers to "love their enemies," to do good to those who hated them, and to pray for those who spitefully used and evilly treated them. He had none of that sophistry which could reconcile the horrors of the battle-field—the anger, the revenge and the cruelty which reign there—with these benevolent precepts. The simple acceptance of revealed truth was strongly marked in the character of the primitive Quakers. They sought not to evade or fritter away the strict and positive injunctions of Holy Writ, because they came in collision with popular opinion, or thwarted the wayward inclinations of the human heart. "I told them," says George Fox, when speaking of the above-mentioned circumstance, "that I knew from whence all wars arose, even from the lusts, according to James' doctrine, and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars. Yet they courted me to accept the offer, and thought I did but compliment them. But I told them I was come into the covenant of peace, which was before wars and strifes." Persuasion not effecting their object, they threw him into the common jail, where he lay for six months, but without shaking his constancy.

When Sir George Booth afterward rose in favor of the king, the Committee of Safety solicited Friends to enroll and join the army, offering important posts and commands to some of them. But neither the sharpness of their sufferings on one hand, nor prospects of honors or preferment on the other, could induce them to violate their Christian testimony in favor of universal peace; and to the present day it has been steadily maintained, at no inconsiderable sacrifice both of liberty and estate.

The situation of the African race and of the Indian nations in America claimed much of G. Fox's attention and sympathy. One of his first engagements among his friends, after reaching Barbadoes, was to hold a meeting of conference, in which, among other directions, he enjoined them "to train their negroes up in the fear of God, that all might come to the

knowledge of the Lord, and that, with Joshua, every master of a family might say, 'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' I desired also that they would cause their overseers to deal mildly and gently with their negroes, and not use cruelty toward them, as the manner of some hath been and is, and that after certain years of servitude they should make them free." In one of his epistles he expresses the sentiment that "liberty is the right of all men," and on many occasions he evinced a strong solicitude that the benefits of a religious education should be extended to them, as being equally interested with others in that salvation which was purchased for us by the Saviour's death.

His mind, expanded by Christian benevolence, reached forth in desire for the salvation of all mankind. So exceedingly precious did he esteem the glad tidings of the Gospel, and so adapted to the wants of man in every situation, that he not only preached Christ crucified to the slaves and Indians while in America, but urged upon his brethren the same duty. "All Friends, everywhere," says he in one of his epistles, "who have Indians or Blacks, are to preach the gospel to them and other servants, if you be true Christians." "And also you must instruct and teach your Indians and Negroes, and all others, that Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man, and gave himself a ransom for all men, to be testified in due time, and is the propitiation, not for the sins of Christians only, but for the sins of the whole world." Again he observes, "Do not neglect your family meetings among your whites and negroes, but do your diligence and duty to God and them." In another epistle to his friends he directs them to go among the Indians, and get the chiefs to assemble their people, in order that they may declare to them God's free salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord.

The same enlarged views are evinced by the letters he wrote to some Friends, who, in pursuing a seafaring life, had been carried captive to the coast of Africa. He advises them to acquire a knowledge of the language spoken in the places where they were situated, in order that they might be able to

preach to the inhabitants the glad tidings of redemption through a crucified Saviour, and to translate works which would tend to promote Christian knowledge.

Nor was this Christian concern for the promulgation of the Gospel confined to George Fox. William Penn, in his frequent intercourse with the Indians, took especial care not only to teach them Christianity by precept, but, by a just, liberal, and blameless conduct and example, to prepare their minds for the reception of its sublime truths. Ministers of the Society, at different periods, travelled into remote countries, without the least prospect of temporal reward, in order to declare unto others that free salvation of which, through the mercy of God, they were made partakers.

In advocating the cause of religious and civil liberty the Society of Friends has always stood conspicuous. During a protracted period of persecution and suffering they nobly refused to sacrifice their conscientious scruples, maintaining a patient but firm and unyielding opposition to the arbitrary intolerance and cruelty of those in power. Their steadfastness and boldness in suffering not only relieved other Dissenters from the sharpness of persecution, but tended to prepare the way for those more correct views of toleration which subsequently obtained.

Baxter, though not favorably disposed towards Friends, bears testimony to their constancy under the cruel operation of the Conventicle Act, observing, "Here the Quakers did greatly relieve the sober people for a time; for they were so resolute, and so gloried in their constancy and sufferings, that they assembled openly at the Bull and Mouth, near Aldersgate, and were dragged away daily to the common jail, and yet desisted not, but the rest came next day. Abundance of them died in prison, and yet they continued their assemblies still."

On this passage, Orme, the biographer of Baxter, makes this remark: "Had there been more of the same determined spirit among others which the Friends displayed, the sufferings



of all parties would sooner have come to an end. The government must have given way, as the spirit of the country would have been effectually roused. The conduct of the Quakers was infinitely to their honor." In another note relative to Friends, the same writer remarks: "The heroic and persevering conduct of the Quakers in withstanding the interferences of government with the rights of conscience, by which they finally secured those peculiar privileges they so richly deserve to enjoy, entitles them to the veneration of all the friends of civil and religious freedom."

There is no doubt that the persecutions which disgraced England during the seventeenth century, and of which Friends in common with other Dissenters bore so large a share, contributed very much toward the introduction and establishment of those more liberal and correct views of toleration and civil liberty which succeeded, and so happily distinguish the present times. The constancy of Friends under suffering; their uniform testimony in favor of liberty of conscience to all; the boldness with which they exposed the rapacity and illegal proceedings of the persecuting priests, justices, and judges; and their repeated and earnest applications to the king and Parliament were eminently instrumental in preparing the way for the passage of the Toleration Act, under William and Mary, in 1688.

It was not as a boon for themselves that they urged the adoption of this great measure: they took the simple ground that liberty of conscience was the right of all men; and that all interference of the government in matters of religion, by which the subject was debarred from the exercise of this right, provided he did not molest others, was contrary to Christianity, to reason, and to sound policy.

In framing the government of Pennsylvania, William Penn adopted these principles, and carried them out to the fullest extent; not only tolerating every religion which owned the existence of a God, but making the professors of all eligible to offices.

Sir James Mackintosh, in his History of the Revolution in



England, in explaining the part which William Penn took in defending the declaration of indulgence issued by James—a measure which, however just the rights it granted, was nevertheless denounced as an unconstitutional and arbitrary assumption of power—has these observations: “The most distinguished of their converts was William Penn, whose father, Admiral Sir William Penn, had been a personal friend of the king, and one of his instructors in naval affairs. This admirable person had employed his great abilities in support of civil as well as religious liberty, and had both acted and suffered for them under Charles II. Even if he had not founded the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as an everlasting memorial of his love of freedom, his actions and writings in England would have been enough to absolve him from the charge of intending to betray the rights of his countrymen. But, though the friend of Algernon Sidney, he had never ceased to intercede, through his friends at court, for the persecuted. An absence of two years in America, and the occupation of his mind, had probably loosened his connection with English politicians, and rendered him less acquainted with the principles of the government. On the accession of James he was received by that prince with favor, and hopes of indulgence to his suffering brethren were early held out to him. He was soon admitted to terms of apparent intimacy, and was believed to possess such influence that two hundred suppliants were often seen at his gates imploring his intercession with the king. That it really was great appears from his obtaining a promise of pardon for his friend, Mr. Locke, which that illustrious man declined, because he thought that the acceptance would have been a confession of criminality. He appears in 1679, by his influence on James, when in Scotland, to have obtained the release of all the Scotch Quakers who were imprisoned, and he obtained the release of many hundred Quaker prisoners in England, as well as letters from Lord Sunderland to the lord lieutenants in England for favor to his persuasion several months before the declaration of indulgence. It was no wonder that he should be gained over by this power of doing good. The very occupations in

which he was engaged brought daily before his mind the general evils of intolerance and the sufferings of his own unfortunate brethren." "It cannot be doubted that he believed the king's object to be universal liberty in religion, and nothing further. His own sincere piety taught him to consider religious liberty as unspeakably the highest of human privileges, and he was too just not to be desirous of bestowing on all other men that which he most earnestly sought for himself. He who refused to employ force in the most just defence, felt a singular abhorrence of its exertion to prevent good men from following the dictates of their conscience." P. 289.

Previous to this period William Penn had written and suffered much in defence of liberty of conscience, and it was to be expected that, when thousands of his friends were suffering imprisonment and spoliation by merciless informers and magistrates, he would eagerly embrace the relief afforded by the king's indulgence, without a very profound investigation of the disputed point of royal prerogative or the secret motives which influenced the Crown.

Another subject which claimed the early attention of George Fox was the promotion of useful learning. He recommended the establishment of two boarding-schools, which were accordingly opened, one for boys and the other for girls. Although the Society has always contended that human learning was not an essential requisite for the ministry of the gospel, yet it has from a very early period been careful to provide for its members the benefits of education. The following recommendation was issued by the Yearly Meeting as early as the year 1695, viz :

"Advised, that schoolmasters and mistresses who are faithful Friends and *well qualified* be encouraged in all counties, cities, great towns, or other places where there may be need; and that care be taken that poor Friends' children may freely partake of such education as may tend to their benefit and advantage, in order to apprenticeship." From that period to the present time the subject has frequently been earnestly enjoined on the attention of Friends, and large sums expended

in founding seminaries for their youth. Soon after the settlement of Philadelphia, William Penn founded a grammar school for Greek and Latin, and incorporated a board of education, which is still in operation, under the title of "The Overseers of the Public School founded by charter, in the town and county of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania," with a corporate seal bearing this inscription: "Good instruction is better than riches."

It would not be practicable in this brief sketch to do justice to other members of the Society who aided in carrying out the liberal views which we have endeavored to portray. It is sufficient to remark that those views were the general characteristics of the Society, and some of them peculiar to it. For a long period they maintained many of them single-handed and in opposition to the general voice of the community. That their faithful labors in these great works of Christian benevolence have contributed to bring them to their present condition cannot be denied; nor yet that the principles of the Society of Friends, and the practices consequent upon them, are eminently calculated to promote the religious and moral improvement of mankind, and to augment the sum of human happiness.

It is no less the privilege and interest than it is the duty of Christians to be diligent in the use of those means which a merciful Providence has placed within their reach, for attaining a correct knowledge of the principles and practices of our holy religion.

If we have a proper sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life, of our responsibility as accountable and immortal beings, and of the vast importance of the concerns which relate to the salvation of the soul, we shall not rest satisfied without a careful inquiry into the truth of those doctrines and precepts by which we profess to regulate our conduct, and to build our hopes of future happiness in a world that will never have an end. We shall frequently ponder the inspired pages of Holy Writ as the divinely authorized record of the Christian religion, and raise our hearts in aspirations to our heavenly Father

for the light of his Holy Spirit to illumine our darkness, and give us a saving knowledge of the Truth as it is in Jesus. Nor will it be less interesting to us to trace out the result of these principles, as exhibited in the examples of those who have gone before us.—To inquire what fruits of holiness they produced in their conduct and conversation,—what support they derived from them amid the trials inseparable from mortal existence, and what consolation and hope they yielded in the hours of disease and of death. If, in the course of our researches, we discover that they were remarkable for their justice, their integrity, their meekness and humility—were patient under suffering, even when wrongfully inflicted; zealously devoted to the cause of Christ and cheerfully given up to spend their time and substance for its advancement; “blameless and harmless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, amongst whom they shone as lights in the world,” we may be assured that the tree whence these fruits of the Gospel sprung could not be evil. The faith which showed itself by such works of righteousness must be that by which the saints of old “obtained a good report,” and which was their victory. If we follow them to the chamber of sickness and to the bed of death—witness the tranquillity and composure of their spirits; their humble, yet steadfast reliance on the mercy of God through Christ Jesus; their peace and joy in believing; and their hope, full of immortality and eternal life, we shall not only derive the strongest evidence of the soundness of their Christian belief, but, in admiration of its blessed and happy effects, be incited to follow them as they followed Christ.

Differing, as Friends do, in some points from their fellow-professors of the Christian name, construing the requisitions of the Gospel with especial reference to the spiritual nature of true religion, and its non-conformity to the fashion of “the world which lieth in wickedness,” their peculiarities in doctrine, manners, and phraseology have, ever since their first rise, subjected them to greater or less degrees of misrepresentation and obloquy. For although they have uniformly appealed to the Holy Scriptures as the standard and test of all



their doctrines and practices, freely rejecting whatever should be proved to be inconsistent with their Divine testimony, yet, either through ignorance, or prejudice, or the force of sectarian attachments, their repeated declarations have been disregarded or perverted, in order to represent them as slighting those Sacred writings, and their principles as scarcely deserving the name of Christian.

It is often more easy to disparage the character of an opponent, by loading him with opprobrious epithets, than to refute his positions by sound and solid arguments ; and mankind are generally so prone to adopt this course, rather than take the trouble of impartial investigation, that it is not surprising the terms enthusiasts, fanatics, Jesuits, and others of similar or more odious import, should have been freely bestowed on Friends, and credited by too many. Those who have not had the opportunity, or who have disliked the task of ascertaining their real belief, and whose impressions have been chiefly derived from caricatures drawn by persons whose object and interest it is to place them in the wrong, could scarcely fail to form opinions unfavorable to them as a body, however they might respect the piety and sincerity of individual members. Nor would it be surprising if the frequent and confident reiteration of grave, though unjust, charges should have the effect to awaken doubts, even in the minds of the uninformed members themselves ; to lessen their esteem for those devoted Christians, who were the instruments, divinely fitted and made use of, in founding the Society ; and to induce the apprehension that the way and the people thus “everywhere spoken against” must indeed have little claim to Christianity.

It may not be inappropriate to remind the reader that the Son of God himself was “set for a sign that should be spoken against,” and such has been the lot of his church from the earliest periods of its existence. Had the propagation of the Gospel in the days of the apostles depended on the estimation in which they were held by the wise, the learned, and powerful of this world, or on the report which they gave of its char-

acter and design, it must have made little progress ; but there were many others beside the Bereans who were more noble than to be influenced by such means, and who searched for themselves " whether these things were so."

Happily for the Society it has nothing to fear from investigation conducted in the spirit of candor and fairness. The various accusations against it have been fearlessly met and refuted, and of those who may entertain doubts respecting the soundness of its faith it asks a calm and dispassionate attention to its authorized vindications, and to its official declarations of faith.—Whatever ambiguity may hang over the essays of some of its writers, arising either from the heat of controversy, the redundant and loose phraseology of the times, or from unduly pressing an argument, in order to discredit the premises of an antagonist, by exposing the consequences deducible from them, the declarations of faith and the official acts of the Society prove conclusively that on the points where they have been most questioned their views are clear and Scriptural. The records of the Society also show a long list of worthies whose dying hours and sayings bear ample testimony that the principles in which they lived, and by which they endeavored to regulate their actions, did not fail them in the near prospect of death and eternity ; but administered all that support, consolation, and animating hope which give to the death-bed of the Christian its peculiar interest.

It is especially obligatory on the members to be conversant in these matters. Ignorance of them, where the means of information are accessible, is discreditable, if not culpable. We should be prepared to give to every one that asketh us a reason for our faith and hope. If the things which belong to our peace have a due place in our affections, we shall meditate with pleasure on the experience of those who have trodden the path of virtue before us. The fervor of our piety, the strength of our attachment to religious truth, will be promoted by frequently perusing their excellent writings, and dwelling in serious contemplation on the bright example they have left



us, adorned with the Christian graces, and inviting us to follow in their footsteps.

To whatever department of human pursuit we direct our attention, we perceive that men delight in the productions of congenial minds. He who finds that he has little relish for serious things, and that it is difficult to fix his attention upon them, may safely infer that his heart is not right in the sight of God, nor its aspirations directed toward the kingdom of heaven. The religious man delights to dwell on those things which concern the salvation of his soul. He feels a lively interest in the saints and holy men who have entered the celestial city before him ; and, as he contemplates their blameless walk, their faith and patience under trials, their simple obedience and dedication, and, above all, the blessed animating hope of an internal inheritance, which shed a bright radiance around their dying beds, his whole soul kindles with desire to arise and gird himself anew for the heavenly journey, and with increased diligence and ardor to press toward the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus.















